

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE MEETING
November 7, 2017

Members Present: Jim Zajkowski, Mike Montello and Craig Kittel

Others Present: Jeremiah Wendt, Noah Wiedenfeld, Michael Mroz, Andrew Lamers and Lori Brinkman

Mike Montello moved to adopt the agenda as presented, seconded by Craig Kittel and carried.

Mike Montello moved to approve the minutes from the August 28, 2017, meeting, seconded by Jim Zajkowski and carried.

Rights-of-Way Mowing

Michael Mroz explained the Public Works staff is spending an increased amount of time mowing grass throughout the City since the addition of maintaining the New Richmond Cemetery, the airport, and the former community commons site. Staff recommends lessening the burden on the Public Works staff by eliminating the mowing of rights-of-way adjacent to privately owned property throughout the City and putting the responsibility on the owners as it is in most areas throughout the City. There was also a suggestion to hire another seasonal employee to help with mowing. Considerable discussion followed.

Mike Montello moved to proceed with staff's recommendation and identify rights-of-way areas currently maintained by the City that border privately owned property and send letters to explain that the City will no longer mow the rights-of-way beginning in 2018, seconded by Craig Kittel and carried.

City Property on Rounds Avenue

Jeremiah Wendt explained the City owns a parcel of land on Rounds Avenue at the far eastern end of East Third Street. One of the adjacent neighbors has inquired about the possibility of acquiring this parcel from the City. Staff has researched this parcel and it is unclear whether the parcel is considered part of the Third Street right-of-way or a stand-alone lot. This distinction will determine whether the parcel needs to be vacated. If it is vacated, it would be divided evenly between the abutting property owners. If it is a stand-alone lot, the parcel could be sold.

Mike Montello moved to proceed in determining whether the parcel is right-of-way, which will determine the next step of how to dispose of the parcel, seconded by Craig and carried.

Alley Ordinance

At the October work session, the City Council voted to proceed with having City staff draft an alley ordinance. The draft ordinance includes language placing weight limits on alleys, requiring alleys to be paved with asphalt, and sharing asphalt costs 50/50 between the City and the abutting property owners based on lineal frontage. The Public Works Committee has reviewed the draft ordinance. Discussion followed on weight restrictions, thicker base and asphalt surfaces, and signage. Jeremiah Wendt agreed to research alley signage in other cities with regard to weight restrictions and speed limits. Jeremiah stated the plan is to replace all alleys over the next ten years, beginning with the ones in the worst condition.

Mike Montello moved to approve the draft alley ordinance noting the change in weight restrictions (item “f”) to 9,000 pounds and to allow the addition of signage at alley entrances, seconded by Craig Kittel and carried.

Cemetery Fence

Michael Mroz explained the cemetery fence along the east side of the cemetery (along Starr Avenue) has been removed. Based on discussion at the August 28 Public Works meeting, Michael researched costs for purchasing hedges to form a border where the fence used to be. The total cost for hedges would be approximately \$2,000 versus the \$12,160 for four-foot black chain-link fencing. Michael recommended two different plant possibilities for the hedges.

Jim Zajkowski moved to purchase the Compact Cranberry Viburnum hedges to plant along the cemetery border on Starr Avenue, seconded by Mike Montello and carried.

Paperjack Drive Speed Data

Since the reconstruction of Paperjack Drive in 2016 and the installation of the radar sign on the east end of the project, Staff has collected traffic speed and volume data. Jeremiah Wendt presented the data to the Committee. The data showed 85% of vehicles traveled under 32 mph. Seventy percent of vehicles were in the 20 to 32 mph range as expected. The Paperjack radar signs are permanent. Mike Montello requested that the traffic speed and volume data be collected and reviewed twice a year so that the Committee can monitor the situation long-term. Jeremiah will present the data to the Public Safety Committee as well.

Comprehensive Plan Transportation Issues

Several issues have been brought up by members of the Public Works Committee, City Staff, and members of the Community Action Plan related to transportation issues in the Knowles Avenue downtown corridor. Because these issues have significant overlap and one tends to greatly affect the others, staff is recommending they all be discussed as part of the larger Comprehensive Planning effort, rather than discussed as individual items for the Public Works Committee to address. Staff is recommending a focused area of study as part of the Comprehensive Plan that will touch on each of the issues and give direction for short- and long-term solutions. Jeremiah would like the focus area to be from just north of the river south to Sixth Street and should encompass vehicle, bicycle and pedestrian traffic along Knowles Avenue. Incidentally, Jeremiah stated traffic counts along Knowles Avenue have been reduced 50% since the Highway 64 reconstruction.

Downtown Signage

The current wayfinding signs in downtown New Richmond are becoming old and difficult to read. Noah Wiedenfeld and Jeremiah discussed creating new wayfinding signage. Locations such as local schools, churches, WITC, the Police Department, and parks can be included on wayfinding signs (no privately-owned businesses) to be displayed on Knowles Avenue. Noah presented drawings of possible new signage. The signage would need to be submitted to the DOT for approval. Discussion followed. The Committee and staff agree signage needs to be consistent. There was discussion on the current two-hour parking signs in the downtown area. Downtown business owners have varied opinions on the two-hour parking limits. The Police Department has not been actively monitoring the two-hour restriction in recent years. City staff recommends removing the existing two-hour parking signs without replacement and reviewing the matter again in three months to see if there have been any issues or strong feedback from downtown businesses.

Mike Montello made a motion to direct City staff to proceed with submitting the proposed wayfinding signs for DOT approval, purchasing and installing the new signs over the winter, and removing the downtown “two-hour” parking signs, seconded by Craig Kittel and carried.

Emerald Ash Borer Management Plan & Ordinances

Noah Wiedenfeld provided an update on the Urban Forestry Project, which was funded by a \$230,000 grant from the Wisconsin DNR and requires several components to be completed by the end of the year. The tree inventory in the public rights-of-way has been completed. When ash trees are removed, they should be replaced with a variety of tree species. Mike Mroz mentioned the Public Works department has purchased saws and safety equipment with some of the grant money.

No action is needed at this time.

Communications and Miscellaneous

The subject of Refuse/Recycling was brought up with regard to the possibility of contracting a single refuse/recycling company for all needs in the City. Jeremiah stated the plan is to draft a Request for Proposals (RFP) over the next month, bring the RFP to the Public Works Committee for review and recommendation, and then bring the RFP before the City Council.

Craig Kittel moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Jim Zajkowski and carried

Meeting adjourned at 4:47 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Lori Brinkman